


National Security Agency not vouching for details about its Utah spy center

 deseretnews.com/article/865552362/National-Security-Agency-not-vouching-for-details-about-its-Utah-spy-center.html
Steve Fidel

March 19, 2012



[NSA spy center: Unsettling details emerge, but director denies allegations](#)

From our archives, Dec. 20, 2009: [Big Brother is coming: NSA's cyber spy center a power grab](#)

BLUFFDALE — The \$1.5 billion spy complex being built for the National Security Agency is becoming more conspicuous as construction advances at Camp Williams within sight of traffic on I-15.

But the agency building 1 million square feet of enclosed space, including 100,000 square feet of space just for computers that will gather and digest intelligence information, continues to do what it does best — keep secrets — when asked about the project.

The NSA sent a short statement to the Deseret News on Friday, but only after Wired Magazine compiled a [voluminous story](#) published the same day. The broadly researched story builds the skeleton of its story using information NSA

released at its January 2011 groundbreaking and puts meat and skin on that skeleton with anecdotal data from the computer and information technology industries.

One thing the Utah Data Center is not likely to run short of: really big numbers.

Wired postulates that in order to monitor global Internet traffic for intelligence-gathering purposes, it would need to digest the work of 2.7 billion Internet users and have the ability to store 500 quintillion pages of text. That's 500 followed by 18 zeroes.

The Wired story also draws from an interview with William Binney, one of the two co-founders of the NSA's Signals Intelligence Automation Research Center. Wired says Binney was at odds over the constitutionality of the agency's Stellar Wind program and its scope of eavesdropping on domestic phone calls and the inspection of domestic email.

"According to Binney — who has maintained close contact with agency employees until a few years ago — the taps in the secret rooms dotting the country are actually powered by highly sophisticated software programs that conduct 'deep packet inspection,' examining Internet traffic as it passes through the 10-gigabit-per-second cables at the speed of light," the magazine says.

The NSA statement says only that "many allegations have been made about the planned activities of the Utah Data Center. What it will be is a state-of-the-art facility designed to support the intelligence community's efforts to further strengthen and protect the nation. NSA is the executive agent for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and will be the lead agency at the center."

Like the anchor store at a shopping mall, the Utah Data Center is seen as having the potential to benefit a continually growing portfolio of information technology businesses, like the under-construction technology complex Adobe is building across the freeway in Lehi. Both Brigham Young University and the University of Utah have their eyes on the data center because of the potential for future jobs for its students. The U. has already developed curriculum with the data center in mind.

The NSA has not responded directly to questions about technology offshoots. Nor has it addressed nagging questions about whether the data center makes it a target that presents dangers to surrounding communities. The statement released Friday sends the signal the NSA intends to maintain a posture of being vague.

"We are not going to dissect any particular news story — especially one that relies in part on the speculation of former officials and several unnamed sources," the NSA statement says. "Those of us who are privileged to be a part of this great institution, NSA, see firsthand that our nation is indeed becoming safer as a result of our hard work, dedication and the collaboration across the entire intelligence community."

E-mail: sfidel@desnews.com

Twitter: [SteveFidel](#)